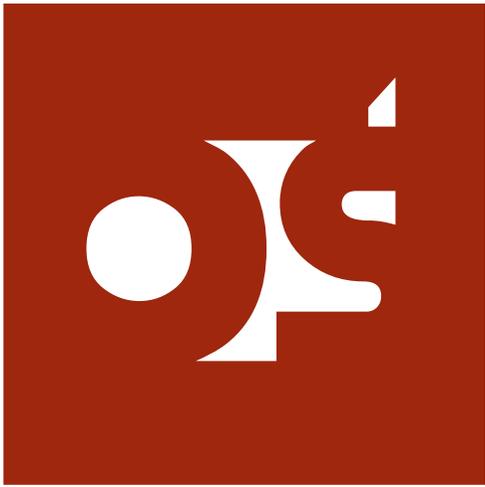


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# EDITORIAL

The last five years at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum have been a period of considerable changes: attendance has constantly grown to new record highs, a new main exhibition is under construction, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation has been created for funding maintenance of the authentic Memorial Site, and a new visitors center is being created. In this edition of *Oś* we publish an extensive interview with Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, who has directed the Museum for the last five years. In the September edition, we also report on two round anniversaries, that took place in August and in September: the murder of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, as well as the first experiment in mass killing through the use of Zyklone B. Both of these events had their place in the cellar of Block

number 11 (pictured on the cover), the building that prisoners named the “Death Block.”

We also recommend reading an article by the volunteers from abroad, who worked in the past year at the International Youth Meeting Center. It recounts how they view the history of Auschwitz, as well as life in modern day Oświęcim.

On the pages of the Center for Dialogue and Prayer, you can read about the commemoration of the death of Edith Stein, known today as Saint Teresia Benedicta of the Cross. We also invite you to take a walk down the path of the Jewish History of Oświęcim. ■

Paweł Sawicki  
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## A GALLERY OF THE 20TH CENTURY

At this moment, our “Gallery of the Twentieth Century” is going... back in time! There is no need to slight or mock this oxymoron, since there were moments in history of moving back... to the future! So, here we are going back to the second half of the nineteenth century, thanks to a collection of vin-

tage photographs that were found in a small, one hundred-year-old trunk. The leather-bound albums, decorated with metal hinges, as well as the photographs they contain, can be found at our city museum located in the castle. The pictures, presented on cardboard backgrounds, are of various sizes, and

have been mainly taken inside photographic studios—rarely outdoors—but, in an astonishingly modern-looking technological way. It is as if they had just been taken yesterday and given a light bronze or sepia tone—you are able to look at both sides of the presented photographs: on the front are the individuals who had been photographed, while on the back there are delicate graphical lithographs—advertisements of the given studio, with a list of the awards and medals that it had garnered at photography exhibitions as well as contests. The oldest of the photographs that I admired was one with a dedication from 1870! In most cases, those who were photographed were either standing or sitting in front of an artistic backdrop, that had the studio’s own specific trademark—posing in a solemn and serious manner, conscious of the fact that they are taking part in a, still, rather secret amalgamation of art and technology that magically reproduces reality.

The photographs present a variety of different individuals and their social or working class: wealthy burghers, noble ladies of the manor, military men of various ranks “festooned with medals,” officials of various levels—in this case Imperial Galician officials—while there is also a photo that was taken in Kiev and two which come from Łódź. What astonishes and impresses is the chemical-optical technology that produced these images; to this day they are still so vibrant and crisp!

Photographic studios existed in many cities as well as towns and had various reputations, not to mention clients. Some crossed over into the history of photography’s beginnings as well as the world of art, such as the studio of Walery Rzewuski, who worked for decades in Cracow, or that of Józef Eder, who also had a shop in Oświęcim.

Here, I present a reproduction, a photo of a photograph, which comes from my collection: a beautiful girl, whom I know nothing about except that her picture was found in our family album, most probably, a century ago—and what connects the two of us is not only the album, or the technological photographic process, but also... genetics! ■



Photo: Andrzej Winogrodzki

Photo from Andrzej Winogrodzki’ collections

Andrzej Winogrodzki



## 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF FATHER MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

More than two thousand people, among them former inmates of Auschwitz, Polish pilgrims from all over the country, and the staff of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum attended a Mass, concelebrated by cardinals, bishops, priests and monks at the former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp Auschwitz.



Seventieth anniversary of the death of Father Maksymilian Kolbe

Liturgy was celebrated near the cell in Block 11, where Father Maximilian Kolbe died and the ceremony was the culmination of the seventieth anniversary of the death of the Franciscan, murdered in Auschwitz in August 1941. Before Mass, pilgrims reached the camp from the Franciscan Center in Harmże and the St. Maximilian Kolbe Church in Oświęcim. The faithful and the clergy walked to Block 11, where at the Death Wall—the place where the Nazis executed thousands of pris-

oners—they placed flowers and lit candles. The field altar featured the wooden rosary of St. Maximilian, donated by him to a fellow prisoner, and the rose of Benedict XVI, which the Pope bestowed on the Memorial during his pilgrimage in 2006. Unlike other papal roses, which are usually gold, this is the only one in the world that is black. Mass was presided over by Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz. In his Homily, he said: "In the intentions of its creators, the concentration camp

Auschwitz-Birkenau was to become a tool to create a world without God, a closed world of superhumans who despised other man because of differences of race, nationality, culture and language. Here on this earth, the sons and daughters of the Jewish people, taking their origin from Abraham, were annihilated. Here Poles, Gypsies, Russians, Germans, and innocent people from all over Europe were murdered."

Dziwisz referred to the memorable words of John Paul II during his visit to the Memorial in 1979: "I could not fail to come here as Pope ... I come to join you, no matter what your faith is, in once again looking into human affairs in the eye." The Cardinal stressed the importance of mutual respect for human dignity. "May the names of our love and our attitude be the sensitivity of the heart, solidarity, dialogue and respect for loved ones, but also for those who think differently," urged Dziwisz. Archbishop Ludwig Schick of Bamberg in Germany said: "As Germans we inflicted much injustice and suffering on many people in this place. It is a miracle that—as Germans—we can be here, to

pray and thank God for his love." President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski sent a letter to the participants. "The pessimism and bitterness, which swell up in every person who visits the former German death camps, can now—thanks to father Kolbe's heroic deed—be contrasted with another, beautiful face of humanity, faith in the victory of goodness and hope for a better future for our world," the President wrote.

The celebrations ended with an appeal for peace in the world from "the former concentration camp Auschwitz, site of the death of millions of innocent people and a symbol of totalitarianisms, which in the first half of the twentieth century dominated Europe." "World peace will reign when love makes itself at home in our hearts and we find our own humanity," the authors of the appeal urged. ■

jarmen

### RAJMUND KOLBE

Rajmund Kolbe was born on October 8, 1894 in Zduńska Wola. In 1910 he joined the Franciscan Order in Lviv, where he received the name Maximilian. In 1912 he began his studies in Rome in philosophy and theology, obtaining doctorates in those disciplines, and was ordained a priest. He returned to Poland in 1919. In 1927 he founded a monastery in Niepokalanów near Warsaw and a publishing house. He was also a missionary in Japan. On May 28, 1941, he was imprisoned in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Two months later he offered up his life in exchange for that of a stranger, Franciszek Gajowniczek, sentenced to death by starvation in reprisal for the escape of a prisoner. He died on August 14, 1941, killed by an injection of phenol in the cellars of the so-called Death Block. He was beatified by Pope Paul VI in 1971, and canonized by the Blessed John Paul II on October 10, 1982. In 1999 he was proclaimed by the Pope the patron of blood donors. He is also the patron of the Diocese of Bielsko-Żywiec. ■

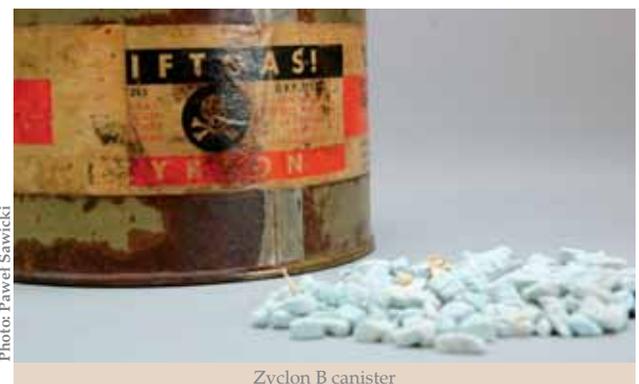
## 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST MASS GAS KILLING

The first trial of the mass killing of prisoners with the use of Zyklon-B in the Auschwitz camp probably began seventy years ago, on September 3, 1941, when 850 prisoners were killed. Immediately after evening roll call, the Germans locked about 600 Soviet POWs and 250 sick Polish prisoners selected from the camp hospital in 28 cells in the cellar of Block 11 (then Block 13). Ten prisoners from the penal company, who had been confined to the jail since September 1 following the escape by a prisoner, were also there.

In the volume of the *Voices of Memory* series devoted to the history of the crematoria and gas chambers in the Auschwitz camp, the head of the Museum Research Department, Dr. Piotr Setkiewicz, wrote that "About 600 Soviet POWs and 250 patients from the hospital were taken to the cellars of Block 11 on orders from camp director SS-Hauptsturmführer Karl Fritsch, after which pellets of Zyklon B, a preparation

used previously in the camp for sanitation purposes (pest control), were poured through the cellar windows. The windows were covered with earth. The following day, after determining that some of the POWs and prisoners were still betraying signs of life, the SS men poured in another dose of gas and succeeded in raising its concentration to lethal levels. This was the first occasion on which the cre-

matorium furnaces proved incapable of burning such large numbers of corpses. Some bodies were stored for several days in the morgue room, while other corpses were most probably buried in a mass grave." After this experiment, the Germans adapted the morgue at the crematorium in the Auschwitz I camp as the first gas chamber. In view of the proximity of the prisoner blocks, the camp



Zyklon B canister

administration offices, and the Oświęcim-Brzeszcze road, the killing of people with gas was transferred to a place that was easier to isolate. A provisional gas chamber was set up in the house that had belonged to an expelled Polish farmer near the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp,

which was then under construction, in the spring of 1942. An additional farmhouse was adapted for this purpose a few months later, and the construction of four crematoria with gas chambers began at the Birkenau camp in 1942. ■

Paweł Sawicki



## THE FIRST MASS GASSING IN ACCOUNTS BY PRISONERS

Former prisoner Kazimierz Halgas gave an account in which he recalls the selection in the camp hospital. "After entering, the SS physicians ordered all the patients to move to the left side of the room, set up a table in the center aisle, and sat down there. The patients passed by them single file on their way to the other side of the room. The SS physicians evaluated the prisoners by sight without examining anyone, only asking a patient an occasional question such as: Do you have pain in your lungs? Or: Do you have pain in your kidneys? They ordered some of the prisoners, particularly the more worn-down ones, to stand off to the side. I stood next to them with the box full of the prisoners' file cards, taking out and giving them the appropriate ones, while an orderly standing beside me noted down or corrected the numbers that had previously been marked on the patients' chests with a chemical pencil. The patients were led out into the little yard between the blocks, where patients were brought from the other departments in turn. Many of the patients lay down on the ground out of exhaustion and others shivered with cold because they were wearing only shirts. It was a woeful sight. Before evening roll call, the block bosses and SS men led the patients to the penal company block. In the evening we received supplies, bread and extras, for the full patient population. I went to infirmary *Oberkapo* Bock and asked where to send the food for the patients. He made a gesture as if I were crazy and told me to pass out the food to the patients there because the others would no longer be eating." Stanisław Suliborski recalled the moment when a group of Soviet POWs, who were later killed with gas, arrived in the camp. "At about

2300 hours we heard people screaming and dogs barking from the direction of the camp gate. We sneaked looks out the window, from which we could see part of the camp street leading to Block 13. Before our eyes there soon appeared the outlines of several hundred people in uniform overcoats, escorted by rows of armed SS men on both sides of the street. Shouts of 'Put him out of his misery!' in Russian oriented us to the fact that the men under guard were Russian. The commotion died down inside the gate of Block 13. The SS men left and everything was quiet."

After the completion of the gassing, prisoners from the camp hospital were ordered to carry the corpses out of the cellar and transport them to the crematorium. One of them, an orderly from the surgical block named Jan Wolny, described the event. "The whole group that I was in was marched on the run to the yard of Block 13," says Wolny. "There were several SS men there and one of them explained to us that we would carry the dead up out of the cellar and remove their clothing. After undressing the corpses, we were supposed to lay them out in the middle of the yard. I will never forget what I saw on entering the cellar. The dead bodies of prisoners and Soviet POWs lay scattered around, intertwined in confusion. Their eyes and mouths were wide open. While carrying and undressing the corpses I noticed that many of those who had been gassed had rags blocking their mouths and noses. The next day, we were also forced to load the corpses on carts and take them to the crematorium. No prisoners were allowed outside their blocks. Two orderlies took each corpse by the arms and legs and tossed it onto the cart in a single movement. Orderlies on the cart arranged the cold dead bodies in several layers rising high above the sides of the cart. We pushed the loaded cart through the whole camp to the crematorium." ■



Photo: Daria Kutkiewicz

Visitors in Auschwitz I

## ALREADY ONE MILLION VISITORS

A million people have visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum between January and the early days of September 2011. A record number of 1,400,000 people visited the grounds of the former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp Auschwitz during the whole of 2010. There are many indications that the record will be broken this year. The Auschwitz Memorial has the highest visitor numbers of any Museum in Poland.

Visitors are shown the grounds and buildings of the former camp by 270 guides who receive special informational and linguistic training. "We ensure professional service to each and every person who comes here," said Andrzej Kacorznyk, head of the Visitor Service Section. "We

try to reach the visitors in their native languages. Therefore we have a rise in the numbers of guides who speak even the less common languages. At present we offer a choice of twenty languages." The steady rise in interest and increase in the number of people who want to learn

about the history of the camp is an exceptionally positive development. "The greatest numbers of people visit the Museum during the vacation months. In August there were almost 200,000. They were mainly individual visitors, families, or smaller organized groups. School and

youth groups predominate in the other months," said Kacorznyk. Just a few years ago, the site of the camp had about half a million visitors per year, a figure that has now nearly tripled. For this reason, the Museum is engaged in an intense effort to create a modern visitor service

center. It will be built on a site of more than three hectares adjacent to the Memorial, providing the infrastructure and parking essential to meet the needs of the ever increasing numbers of people who come to the Auschwitz Museum each year. ■

Bartosz Bartyzel

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR DEVELOPMENT

A permanent Municipal-Museum Cooperative Group has been set up to coordinate joint development. Besides Mayor Janusz Chwierut of the city of Oświęcim and Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum Director Piotr M. A. Cywiński, it includes specialists on investment, promotion, and tourism. The group arose as a joint initiative of the Mayor and the Museum Director.

"Until now, there has sometimes been a lack of even the most basic kind of cooperation that is vital to both the city and the Museum," said Chwierut, adding that "cooperation between the city and the Museum on a partnership basis is not only possible, but downright essential." During a meeting in the Oświęcim town hall where the decision about establishing the group were made, Di-

rector Cywiński gave Mayor Chwierut one of the publications of the Museum *People of Good Will*. It is dedicated to people from Oświęcim region who during the German occupation helped the prisoners of the Auschwitz concentration camp. The discussions that have begun offer the hope that things that were previously difficult or unrealistic will now be different," said Cywiński. "There really are

lots of subjects that we should talk about," he added. "A lot can be done for the sake of development as long as that development is mutually understood and accepted. There has been a crying need for this so far, and everyone has lost out." The first meeting of the permanent working group took place at the Auschwitz Museum. During the session, Director Cywiński presented



The first meeting of the permanent Municipal-Museum Cooperative Group

Photo: Tomasz Fielesz

an analysis of tourism at the Memorial. Afterwards, those in attendance discussed the priorities for the group's work. Following this

first August meeting of the group, others will follow on a regular basis. ■

Bartosz Bartyzel

# THIS PLACE BELONGS TO THE ENTIRE WORLD

In September, it will be five years since Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński has become the director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Paweł Sawicki recently interviewed him, not only about how the last five years have passed, but also about the plans for the future.



Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

Photo: Paweł Sawicki

□ Five years is a long period of time to form an emotional bond with the institution that you direct, especially such an extraordinary one, where emotions play such an immense role. How do you feel after five years of this work?

Auschwitz-Birkenau can be very absorbing—that is true. Previously, there have only been three other directors, managing this Museum, which shows how much you need to contemplate in terms of the institution's long-term evolution, not rapid changes that are accomplished by taking unnecessary shortcuts, or under the influence of our own fleeting whims. Auschwitz is a very difficult place to work at, both because of the understandable emotional aspects, but also because this place belongs to the entire world. This is a job that requires a tremendous amount of diplomacy and dialogue, and moreover, each move must be well thought through in advance.

□ What does—from your perspective, in both the professional and private spheres of life—the Memorial Site give you and what does it take away from you?

Auschwitz is able to give very, very much. And this

Site offers things, which you want to receive as well as those that you don't necessarily care to. Auschwitz opens a very wide perspective on humankind. This vastness is filled, from one end to the next, with extraordinary heroism, sacrifice, survival, as well as unimaginable cruelty, heartlessness, and inhumanity. With such a broad range of human behavior, today our everyday life often seems to be covering a very narrow part of this spectrum. Auschwitz mutes many emotions. But in turn, it allows one to view many of the normal, everyday things through the whole prism of extremes of Auschwitz. It is something that is difficult, I believe, for everyone who works here.

□ What is satisfying about this work for you?

Above all, it is the daily feeling that the work, which is being performed, is very profound, in an

There are many subjects that have potential for genuine development, so to realize these plans we must understand that the city has the opportunity to develop, not "despite of" but "because of" the existence of the Museum and other memorial institutions.

almost tangible sense. Sometimes, only this allows me to come back day after day to such a difficult job. I must also say, that I owe very much

to the people here with whom I work. I have met many very involved and sensitive individuals, who have, in some sense, invested so much of their lives to such a difficult subject.

□ How has the Museum changed in the last five years?

Auschwitz is a very difficult place to work at, both because of the understandable emotional aspects, but also because this place belongs to the entire world.

This is certainly not for me to assess. However, I think that, in particular, we have managed to change the Museum on three different levels. First, it has widened the field for dialogue within the Museum, now many more decisions are made in the course of discussions, conversations, as well as through dialogue on differing views. This is something that I very much wanted right from the beginning. Secondly,

many new projects have been introduced and are being conducted at their acceptable pace. Within most of the Museum, it can be seen that there

are people who really care about these changes, who truly care about professionalism and the effects of their own work. The third level, the one that we have put a huge amount of effort into and that seems to be bringing positive effects is communication with the world. I think the perception of the Museum abroad has also changed to some extent, although still much remains to be done. For example, there are more and more good words that I hear from abroad about our guides. All this does not only positively affect memorialization, but also the image that people abroad have of the Museum as well as of Poland.

□ The Auschwitz Museum is the most visited museum in Poland. In recent years, attendance has steadily grown. What does this mean?

Auschwitz has become a worldwide symbol. Of course as a symbol of the mass murder of European Jews, but also

of the entire system of concentration camps. Moreover, it has become a focal point in debates relating to every genocide, each extreme anti-Semitic event, form of intolerance, as well as hatred. Today many European countries finance the visits of high school students to this Memorial Site, in the hope that by experiencing this place, it will be easier for young people to reflect upon this personally. Auschwitz

has become its own lens, prism, through which we look upon the modern world, trying to identify threats before they become unmanageable.

□ Not long from now, the tourists who come to visit this Site will see enormous changes.

That is true. The purchase of the old PKS bus terminal is a significant sign of the changes. The visitors' parking lot has not been able to accommodate the number of vehicles; and the crowding that occurs at the entrance each season can only be described as nothing good. A new center for visitors will be created, that will provide them with the services of a guide, our publications, and other services. Please take note that this investment in the future has been met with understanding of the local residents. I believe that we are entering an entirely new era, where the Museum will be seen—in a greater measure—as an enormous opportunity for Oświęcim.

□ The new Center for Visitor Services is not the only large investment project being carried out by the Museum.

With Auschwitz, as well as with the history of the Holocaust, we are entering the twenty-first century full of hopes and challenges. The increase in visitor numbers as well as consolidating Auschwitz as a clear symbol is something that will be a great challenge, but we must also remember that the remnants of the former Camps are deteriorating. Such a large number of visitors also has an effect on the state of the original objects. We are of the opinion that we can work around these two issues—find an alternative that will increase the security of the historical objects. But we must also bear in mind the passing of generations. The clearly defined original site is reinforced by the main exhibit which, after sixty years of existence, must be completely reevaluated. At the moment, we are coming to the final stage of its development. It is difficult to say currently when work will begin on its installation,





Prof. Władysław Bartoszewski signing Remembrance Declaration on January 27, 2011. From the left: President of Germany, President of Poland, and Director of Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

Photo: Paweł Sawicki

but it will certainly be of an entirely new quality in the realm of historical and memorial museums in the world. The construction project to adapt the Old Theater for educational use is coming to its final stage. Well, and above all, expansive conservation works are starting at the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau Concentration Camp. In only a few years time, the brick barracks will be opened and available in completely different conditions—after their foundations have been restored, the entire building put through the process of conservation, the protection of the floor surface, and the extension of the content that can be seen there. Taking all this into account, we face a series of small revolutions.

- All of these changes are to, above all, serve the purpose of education—educating people from, in reality, all around the world, who visit the Museum... In your opinion, what are the new educational challenges?

Today, it is most important that young individuals feel more responsible for the world that they inhabit. Only through the growth in one's feelings of responsibility are they able to change things in the long run. We attempt to base this on the foundation of remembrance. It is not always that simple, and it is necessary to be conscious that today's crop of middle school

students are no longer children, nor the grandchildren of the individuals who lived during the Second World War and the Shoah. These events happened during the lives of their great-grandparents. And, of course, this is a history which on the emotional level is becoming more distant. You cannot simply open the doors and wait for people to walk in. You must come outside and welcome them inside. You must go there, where large groups of people gather. Today, tools such as Facebook and Youtube are available. The Museum has to be in these places, if we are to seriously take into account what we want to communicate to individuals. We have started the first e-learning courses as well as created traveling exhibits that have been translated into other languages. Commemoration is not only confined to the Memorial Site.

- Around the Museum there are many institutions connected with the history and education. How do you assess the importance of this diversity of perspectives on Auschwitz?

What is important here is that these initiatives are only local on the surface—here, the entire world is taking part. The Jewish Center has its deep roots in New York, the International Youth Meeting Center is an institution that was created because of the channels

in the positive development of Polish-German relations, and the Center for Dialogue and Prayer is also institutionally rooted in the Diocese of Cracow. These are the worldwide realities of Oświęcim, which are often not valued by public opinion in Oświęcim, including, sometimes, certain local policy-makers. Oświęcim ranks much larger than any city of similar or even slightly larger size in Poland.

- One of the effects of this international view of Auschwitz is the monthly magazine *Oś*. In May, the publication had its three-year anniversary, and in August the fortieth issue was published...

The fact that we have managed to print so many issues is due first and foremost to cooperation, mainly with the Jewish Center, the Center for Dialogue and Prayer, and the International Youth Meeting Center. However, it is also due to the enormous help from the firm Agora, which prints all the issues at cost. In addition to the physical copy of the paper, distributed in Oświęcim, there is an electronic version available on the Internet—also translated into English, thanks to the generous help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is interesting that this informative tool that was specially created for Oświęcim, has found so many readers around the world.

- The last five years have been a difficult time in terms of relations between the city and Museum.

It was longer than five years. However, it must be remembered that these issues were not about the relationship between the citizens of Oświęcim and Museum. The residents were not the instigators of those problems, but a certain individual, who had and was implementing a very personal business plan. I have never had a negative relationship with the citizens of Oświęcim. One can simply look at how resistant they were against the negative propaganda that was being spread about the Museum. During the last election, they showed what kind of leadership they do not want in Oświęcim. Still, it is a shame that this did not take place five years earlier—so that the Museum and city would not have lost those priceless five years.

- However, it finally seems that a change is possible. What is the current situation in relations between the city and the Museum? How do you see the cooperation in the future?

Mainly, everyone is hoping for a simple normality to arise. Together with the new city authorities, we have agreed to hold regular meetings and speak about all the subjects that connect the city and Museum. The first

such meeting has already taken place in August. There are many subjects that have potential for genuine development, so to realize these plans we must understand that the city has the opportunity to develop, not “despite of” but “because of” the existence of the Museum and other memorial institutions.

- There is the continuous problem that individuals who visit the Memorial Site, leave immediately...

Oświęcim sees this as a problem and in fact this issue exists. But today, it depends only on one factor. The question is whether the education provided by the Museum is to last only four hours, which includes just a basic tour, or should it take on many more forms. Many groups are asking for educational projects that last several days, and that would more fully illustrate the tragedy of European Jews as well as the Nazi German policy of extermination. Unfortunately, we are lacking necessary educational infrastructure for the implementation of these programs today. This is to be created in the Old Theatre building. When this happens, then the number of people who will participate in multi-day conferences, courses, projects will sharply increase. This will benefit hoteliers, restaurateurs, as well as the tour guides who will carry out the longer form guided tours. A great deal still depends on the future of the Old Theatre. For the Museum that is only a practical question about the form of education—a

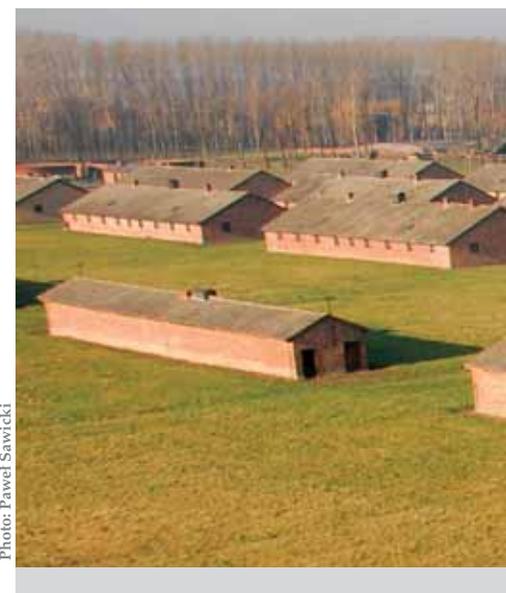


Photo: Paweł Sawicki



four-hour or several-day visit. Both are possible—but for the city, this is a dramatic question which includes developing an entire service sector. I am astonished that the Old Theater is not even mentioned in the fourth stage of the Oświęcim Strategic Government Program, because it would be much more sensible and cost-effective for the city than many of the other projects that are to be implemented in the fourth stage.

- The project to build the memorial mound, which was to directly neighbor the Museum, has slowly been enveloped in an atmosphere of a scandal. There are those who say that there should be a different way to commemorate the victims, perhaps the creation of gardens by the Soła River. Is this a project worth considering?

The project to create the memorial gardens on the opposite side of the Soła River is one that I truly support. First of all, it creates a place where life flourishes, opposite the former Camp's area associated with death. However, this project, which was once proposed by the individuals from Cracow, in my opinion, would require fundamental changes. Those areas are a natural extension of the city park, leading from the edge of Old Town. And we must not only consider individual visitors, to the Camp, who would have to pass to the other side of the river and walk towards the city, but you need to create a space that is friendly primarily for the sake of the local

residents. For the people walking through the park, for the residents of new apartment blocks near the man made lakes and ponds. If you want this to be a living space, why not integrate it in such a way that aesthetically, it can be a playground for mothers with their young children. I dream of a people-friendly space, which will primarily and naturally be of use for the residents of Oświęcim. While at the same time, it fulfills its greatest role. And in the case of the mound? It is better to let that rest in peace. It is unfortunate that the late Józef Szajna was exploited in such a fashion—and he was not the only one.

- In recent years at the Museum there is—something that is completely not uncommon—a battle for finances associated with the funding for the conservation of the Memorial Site, but also the simple existence of the institution. How do you assess the situation at this moment in time?

Above all, the greatest financial needs have to do with lack of funds for expansive as well as essential conservation works. In the troubled budget of the Ministry of Culture, we have not been able to find such funds. This is why two years ago we formed the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. Its purpose is to manage the enormous pool of money, up to 120 million Euros, and use the gains it is able to achieve to finance conservation works. Prime Minister Donald Tusk has formally turned to many governments with the request to support

this initiative. Thanks to the work of several individuals, after two years, we already have commitments and even signed agreements for over 80 million Euros, so until the end of this year we should reach the sum of around 100 million Euros. Several million Euros have flowed into the Fund, and in 2012, the first million Złoty will be used for conservations. Ultimately, we think that this fund will be able to raise about 15 million Złoty. No other Memorial Site in the world has such a financial tool. I don't know of any other historical monument... However, there are certain areas that are still in need of more financing, and as in any government institution, in culture—that is how it is. We are carrying out discussions at various levels, above all, so that there is more funding, taking into account that the Museum does not charge for admission. Today, however, the funds that are provided only cover half of the Museum's activities, which creates difficulties in the functioning of the institution.

- Are the funds that will be obtained through the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation to have any effect on local issues?

Of course—in fact, most of this money remains in the region, through services, items ordered, and through contracts. The Museum's budget today, which is around 30 million Euros—and is bound to increase in just a few years, mainly thanks to the Foundation, to almost 50 million Euros—will have

an enormous impact on local issues. After all, this money is not being spent on the moon! Already, the mayor of Chelmek has decided on the creation of the conservationist specialization within their school, and it will be a part of the technical lessons. In this area, you must catch the wind in the sails!

- On the other hand, thanks to these funds as well as the many conservation works performed at the Museum it is possible that it will become an important place, in the development of the different fields within the realm of conservation around the world.

In general, conservationists learn to work with items from antiquity, the Middle Ages, as well as the centuries of old. Our laboratories are among the few anywhere in the world, which work exclusively on artifacts from the first half of the twentieth century. These challenges will become interesting to classical conservation schools only in the future. For this reason, many of individuals come as trainees, volunteers, and students of conservation from various countries. Professors working in these fields also come here. It is here that the methods that will be used in the future are being created today.

- In many ways you have had to divide your life into two separate worlds—your life in Warsaw, with your family, and your life in Oświęcim, connected to work at the Museum. This must certainly be a difficult task.

When it comes to this distance, then let us not overexaggerate; working 300 kilometers away from home is nothing unusual, especially with a normally functioning railway system. However, to be honest, there have been certain problems in this area. After five years, I have become accustomed to the constant travel. And when it comes to the emotional side of things, it is actually better that I do not take many of the issues I deal with at the Museum back home with me, to my family, to my private life.

- Have you ever thought about moving here?

There are certain things that would certainly make it easier this way, but the Museum would actually lose out on this. Many of the issues connected to the Auschwitz Museum take place in Warsaw, at the ministries, in the shadow of diplomacy. I do not believe that it would have been possible, for example, to form such a successful Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation at such a distance from all the embassies. This requires having many contacts and connections, so I would also have to travel, however, this time it would be in the other direction.

- What do you like about Oświęcim and how is it to live here?

My favorite thing is to take my bicycle for a ride when I am finished with work. There are many beautiful roads, paths around Oświęcim. ■

*Paweł Sawicki*



Barracks in former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp



# OSHPITZIN. A GUIDE

**B**elow we publish the fourth part of the first guide to the Jewish history of Oświęcim—*Oshpitzin*. This is the result of ten years of historical research and collecting materials by the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oświęcim. The publication is accompanied by a [www.oshpitzin.pl](http://www.oshpitzin.pl) website which presents a virtual map of the Jewish town, accounts of former residents of the town, videos, photos as well as lesson plans for educators. On the next page of the magazine you can find the city map with all the buildings on it.



Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue, c. 1939-1941

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## CHEVRA LOMDEI MISHNAYOT SYNAGOGUE

The Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot (in Hebrew, the Association for the Study of Mishnah) was established in 1893 for religious and educational purposes. Until 1939, its presidents included Natan Silbiger, Abraham Kaufmann, Salomon Joachim Barber and Jakób Singer. During the interwar period, the association's rabbi was Yekele Yankiel Zukerberg from Komarno, the son-in-law of the Sassover admor, who was later replaced by Hayim Yehuda Yudel Halberstam. During its operation the number of members ranged between 90 and 120. Initially, the Association did not have any premises of its own, and prayers took place in the prayer house belonging to the Chrzanover Hasidim (the Chrzanover shtibl) on Hospital Square (today Father Jan Skarbek Square). In 1912 the Lomdei Mishnayot Association acquired a site from Józef and Gizela Glass. In 1913, construction

works began there to build the synagogue. The Association's synagogue was in operation by September 1918, and remained in operation until 1939. During the Second World War, its interior was completely destroyed and the synagogue was turned into a German munitions depot. After the war it was opened again for services (1945-1955) and the few survivors from Oświęcim prayed there. In 1977, the Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue was nationalized by the Communist government, and later used as a carpet warehouse between the years 1992-1997. In 1998 it was returned to the Jewish Community of Bielsko-Biała which, in the same year, donated the synagogue to the Auschwitz Jewish Center. The synagogue is an example of a typical bet midrash (in Hebrew, a house of study) from the beginning of the 20th century, which was a building for both prayer and religious education. In the men's section of the synagogue there are two historic plaques. The first one from 1928 is located on the mehitzta, the wall dividing the men and women's sections, and bears names of three gabbaim (administrators of the synagogue), Ya-

kir Singer, Hayim Goldstein and Alter Neuberg. It is the only original element from the prewar Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot synagogue. The second plaque, the shiviti, is located on the eastern wall of the synagogue, to the right of the aron hakodesh. It was founded by Hinda Tzvetz to honor her late husband Shlomo Zalman Pelzman from Kęty, a rabbi and a teacher (1907). The plaque was most likely mounted on the wall by local survivors soon after WWII.

### SYNAGOGUE (from Greek: assembly)

house of prayer in Judaism. In traditional synagogues, there are separate sections for men and women. An aron hakodesh (Holy Ark) contains scrolls of the Torah, which are read from a bimah (a raised reading table) during some of the services. Customarily, the congregants face the eastern wall, which is where the aron is located and is in the direction of Jerusalem.



Part of Shiviti (contemplative plaque) located on the eastern wall of the synagogue. It was founded by Hinda Tzvetz to honor her late husband Shlomo Zalman Pelzman from Kęty, a rabbi and a teacher (1907)



Seal of Chevra Lomdei Mischnayot

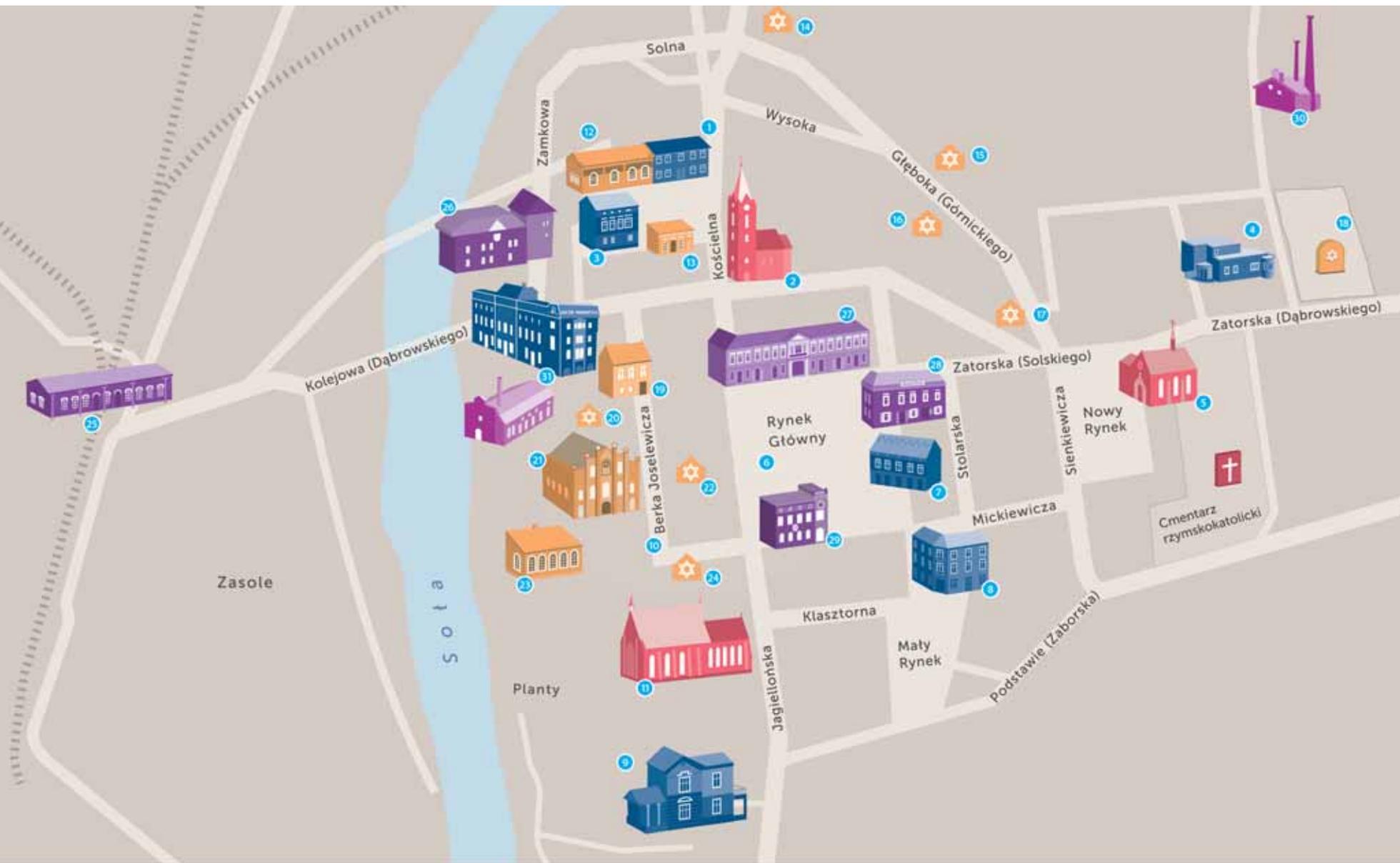
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## CHRZANOVER SHTIBL

The house at 267 Sobieskiego Street belonged to Bernard Gronner and his wife

Ella Gitla from at least 1874. The part of the Sobieskiego Street house, overlooking Father Jan Skarbek Square today, was known as the Chrzanover shtibl as it was used by the Chrzanover Hasids as their house of prayer. In 1904, E.G. Gronner gave the Chevra Lomdei





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Mishnayot Association permission to use the shtibl because it did not have its own synagogue yet.

**SHTIBL**  
(Yiddish:  
small room)

a room for prayer and study and a center of the Hasidic social life typical for Eastern Europe. Usually small in size and modest in decoration.

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**ASIVAT  
ZKEINIM  
ASSOCIATION**

The association, established in 1912, was maintaining a

Jewish nursing home. It was located at 228/18 Głęboka Street (today the crossroads of Górnickiego and Klucznikowska Streets).

In 1920 the organization had 250 members and the board included Fani Schönker as president and Zofia Reich as secretary. Later presidents were Salomea Fränkl (1928-1929) and Samuel Weinberger (1934 and 1936-1937).

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**SCHÖNKER'S  
SHTIBL**

Bet midrash known in Oświęcim as Schönker's shtibl was located in the so called Schönker's Garden (today in the vicinity of Górnickiego Street). It was established by Chaim Schönker (c. 1818-1886)

and housed also a famous Oświęcim yeshiva run by rabbi Usher Zelig Landau (1870-1942) who came to Oświęcim on the spe-

cial invitation of the chief Oświęcim rabbi Osias Pinkas Bombach. The bet midrash was attended by many of the local elites such

as city council members, industrialists, presidents of the Jewish community. ■

*cont.*



Former Jewish home for the elderly in Górnickiego Street, 1980's





# FAREWELL TO THE IYMC

For many years now, the end of August is a time to say goodbye to volunteers who had worked at the International Youth Meeting Center in Oświęcim, having completed their yearlong volunteer service. For twelve months the following volunteers: Anna Mala from the Ukraine serving the Action Reconciliation/Service for Peace, Isabella Riedl and Fredi Hahn of the Gedenkdienst in Austria, as well as Niklas Krekeler from the Internationaler Bund in Germany, looked after groups who were staying at the IYMC on their study visits to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Site. Additionally, they took them on tours of the city of Oświęcim, and shared with them their own experiences and perceptions.

Many times they also had the opportunity to meet former Auschwitz prisoners: Wilhelm Brasse, Kazimierz Smoleń, Tadeusz Sobolewicz, who were frequently hosted at the IYMC during meetings with young individuals, as well as with Zofia Posmysz and August Kowalczyk, who have honored us with their presence during the Center's important events.

According to their interests and abilities, the volunteers created topic based workshops, cared for the IYMC library and its film archive, collected materials which were of interest to them about subject matter connected to the former Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration and Death Camp, the Holocaust, as well as the city of Oświęcim. Simultaneously, they supported the staff of the IYMC

in everyday activities as well as in organizing significant events: ranging from the meeting of the Polish and German presidents with young people from those two countries, the Socio-Political Poster Biannual, Poetry Salons, Good Spirits, art exhibition openings, to meetings with various authors. During their twelve-month stay in Oświęcim, Anna,

Isa, Fredi and Niklas not only had an opportunity to deepen their historical knowledge, they were also able to meet an array of interesting individuals, and develop friendships. They visited the beautiful corners of Poland, those that are not too distant, such as Cracow or Zywiec, see the Beskidy mountains from the peak of Zar, and the castle in Pszczyzna, and those more distant

places, such as Lublin, Warsaw, and Gdańsk. In the short articles written by the young volunteers, you read about their feelings about coming to Oświęcim, the experiences during their year at the IYMC, and they also talk about what this year had been for them as well as what they are planning for the future. ■  
*Written by: Olga Onyszkiewicz  
Translation from German:  
Ela Pasternak*

## POLAND FROM A UKRAINIAN PERSPECTIVE

When I reach back one year into my memory, I remember the joy I felt when I received the message that I am going to volunteer in Poland. I remembered my concerns that I would not be able to learn Polish, that it will be difficult, and the work will be uninteresting... How good it is to remind myself that the past year has been the best time in my life.

In spite of the difficulties, I was able to accomplish everything which I had planned, and even a bit more. I am leaving a part of myself here, in Oświęcim, and taking with me a part of Poland that will always remain in my best recollections. Throughout the entire year, I worked at the International Youth Meeting Center in Oświęcim. I took care of the groups that stayed at the IYMC, helping them in organizing various events,

helping the staff of the Education Department prepare the workshop, "People of Good Will—Stanisława Smreczyńska." I must admit that I intensively worked on, not only the projects that I was responsible for, but additionally on myself. I had to quickly learn to speak Polish, banish my fear of communicating in English, and become accustomed to speaking in front of a large audience. But, most importantly, what I experienced at the IYMC was working

with the most wonderful individuals. They are fantastic, always ready to help and provide support. I truly learned very much from them. If I could, I would take all of them to the Ukraine with me. However, they will always stay in my memory and I hope that I will be able to stay in contact with them after the end of my volunteer work. Poland is a great country. It is so similar to the Ukraine, but at the same time so different. Each city I have been

in had a great impact on me. In Poland, there are so many castles and palaces, that it would take more than ten years to visit each one! It is now that I am coming to terms with how much I will miss Poland. However, I am hopeful that I will return here many more times. Now, I am starting a new path in my life. But the memories, knowledge, and experiences from Poland will stay with me forever! ■  
*Anna Mala*



Anna Mala and Stanisława Smreczyńska

## AUGUST 16, 2010, 10:05 P.M., VIENNA, WESTBAHNHOF (WEST TRAIN STATION)



Photo: IYMC

Fredi Hahn

It is here that I started my journey to Poland, then still unknown to me. I consciously decided to do one year of volunteer work in Oświęcim, due to my interest in history. Where else could I have developed my interest in history more so than here, where 70 years ago, such important historical event had taken place? With a dose of uncertainty and with tears in my eyes, I waved goodbye to my family who accompanied me to the train station, to start my unforgettable journey to the south of Poland.

After seven hours, I was finally at my destination. I saw the first familiar face; it was my predecessor, who welcomed me at the Oświęcim train station. At the time it occurred to me, which came as a complete surprise to me—I was "only" seven hours by train away from my family home and I could not understand a

single word. Luckily, everything was already organized for me. That is how my first day of volunteering at the International Youth Meeting Center in Oświęcim began. I was welcomed with open arms. Luckily, the staff of the IYMC speaks German very well and the first barriers disappeared. Once I overcame the first difficulties in

learning Polish names, I was able to find everything that I needed—well, perhaps with some minor delays. After a few weeks, I knew exactly what my job at the IYMC would be. I was very happy that throughout the entire time, I would have the opportunity to meet new individuals, who have similar interests to mine; and





that I will be able to share my knowledge with them. Wonderful friends as well as other volunteers made my stay abroad much easier. In my apartment in Oświęcim, I felt increasingly better and could spend my free time in a relaxed way; however, sometimes there were moments of conflict with my neighbor. To this day I still don't fully understand what she wanted to tell us—it was probably something having to do with her garden...

I especially remember a particular event: one evening, in one of the local pubs, I happened to overhear some young people who were speaking English. Openly, as is natural for me, I asked them immediately why they were speaking in English and where they were from. As it turned out, one of them is an American who is doing his doctorate. And because of this, he is collecting information from the archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau

State Museum and is interviewing people who live in Oświęcim. Because his knowledge of the Polish language was not the best, his Polish friends helped him in doing various translations. This way, I was able to find new Polish friends in Oświęcim, thanks to whom I could get to know and understand Polish culture to a much greater degree than reading about it in a book. That is why it will be difficult for me to leave Poland

at the end of August and finish my volunteering duties. I will miss the Polish mentality, just as the wonderful Polish beer and many more things. I can honestly say that this year of volunteer service abroad has been the best and most important decision of my life. I became a person who is more independent, open to anything that is new; I have deepened my knowledge of history and, of course, it is a shame that this

year has passed so quickly. I will miss many things. It has often been repeated to me—that's life, people and events come and go, but that, what is most important, stays on forever in your memory—and that is exactly what my year spent in Poland has become. And in conclusion, with full confidence, I can say: IT IS CERTAIN that I will return here! ■

*Fredi Hahn*

## MY YEAR IN OŚWIĘCIM

**M**y one-year volunteer project in Oświęcim is slowly coming to an end. I have worked at the International Youth Meeting Center in Oświęcim since August 2010.

I am an Austrian—born and raised in Vienna. After I finished my high school exams and completed two semesters, studying history in Vienna, I decided to spend a year abroad. My decision to work as a volunteer in Oświęcim was something like a protest against the process of forgetting. Already in primary school I was interested in the history of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Working as a volunteer at the IYMC was my personal decision. I wanted to work with young individuals, accompany them on their visits to the Memorial Site, speak with them about their reflections as well as observations. Already, over a year has passed since I came to Poland and with certainty I can state that I do not regret my decision one bit.

My main task at the IYMC was to care for German-speaking groups on study visits. During my work, I met many individuals who come to Auschwitz for various reasons and with different expectations. Especially interesting for me were the evening discussions with groups. We not only spoke about the vastness of Auschwitz as a cemetery, museum, memorial site, tourist attraction, but also about the contemporary view of this place. Very moving experiences for me were meetings with former prisoners of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. I also gave our guests tours of the city of Oświęcim. I spoke about the castle, the former Jewish street, the main square, Jewish Center that includes the only surviving synagogue, and the

Jewish Cemetery. I was especially happy to lead workshops "Photographs from Auschwitz," for our study groups. I also had the time to better get to know Poland and to improve my knowledge of the Polish language. Nearly every free day I had, I spent in Cracow. I visited countless museums. In July, together with my friends from Austria, we took a four-day trip to Warsaw. The rest of my free time, I spent with the other volunteers. When I think about my twelve months, with complete certainty I can say that I acquired a large amount of knowledge. I learned more about twentieth-century Polish history. I became a more open person, due to my contact with people. I also believe that now I am more sensitive to instances

of racism, anti-Semitism, and all forms of excluding various groups. After finishing a year of volunteer work in Oświęcim, I would like to continue to take part in work that fights racism. This year allowed me to increase my knowledge about the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. I will remember this year, above all, as a time of unforgettable meetings with former Auschwitz Camp prisoners, with young individuals from Poland, Germany, Austria, and the staff of the IYMC. Already during my first days in Oświęcim, I felt good, thanks to the kindness, willingness to help, and openness that I experienced from all of the staff at the IYMC. In the autumn of 2011, I start my pedagogical studies in Vienna. I will study history



Photo: IYMC

Isabella Riedl

and Latin. What I will take with me to my studies as well as to my future work is the experience I gained working with young people. I will do my best, whenever it is possible to come to Poland and to get to know this country even more thoroughly. ■

*Isabella Riedl*

## POLAND FROM A GERMAN PERSPECTIVE

**M**y name is Niklas, and I come from Germany. As a volunteer, I worked for one year at the International Youth Meeting Center. I lived in Oświęcim. Before I started my volunteer work at the IYMC, I had not put too much thought into what life in Poland was going to be like; above all, I was interested in history, especially that of the Second World War.

Auschwitz seemed to me a place where confronting history was something unavoidable. Oświęcim, as a city, appeared in my thoughts to be somewhere in the background. However, just after the beginning of my stay in Oświęcim, I noticed that my attitude towards Auschwitz and Oświęcim was starting to change. The history that I want to share, after my one-year stay in Oświęcim, is a history of my love for Poland as well as Oświęcim. Even

though, due to my work as a volunteer, I had a great deal of experience with Auschwitz, it is not Auschwitz that mainly captivates my thoughts and feelings, but rather Oświęcim. I was captivated by the individuals that I met here, in Oświęcim, the friendships I developed; the evenings I shared with friends at home, on the main square, and at the local pubs: Bazyl, Układ, and Menago; those warm days that I could spend by the Soła River; my neigh-

bors who regularly gave me gifts of fruit and cakes; the bicycle journeys, weekends in Cracow; the Polish wedding in which I was able to take part; Polish birthday parties, the Easter Holidays, and the Unia Oświęcim hockey matches. These are the moments that helped me enjoy my life, right here in Oświęcim. Now, the time has come to return to Germany. It is the beginning of a new stage in my life. Soon, I will start my university studies. In



Photo: IYMC

Niklas Krekeler

my memory, I will retain all these recollections. And, it is for these memories that I wish to thank all of my friends and colleagues from

Poland, Germany, Austria, the Ukraine, and the United States. I thank you all. ■

*Niklas Krekeler*





# A VISIT TO AUSCHWITZ IS NOT ABOUT LEARNING HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE, BUT GAINING MORE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT YOURSELF

**F**rom August 9 to 14, the Center for Dialogue and Prayer held the second European workshops, which were organized by the Maximilian Kolbe Foundation in Germany (Maximilian Kolbe Stiftung).

Maximilian Kolbe Foundation was founded in 2007 and it is born out of the Maximilian Kolbe Werk (MKW)—an institution that was founded in order to help Polish victims of former concentration camps. The help that MKW provides is centered on purchasing medication, essential rehabilitation equipment, as well as material aid. Currently, witnesses of that time period are passing away. We have their testimony and stories of life “after liberation,” sprinkled with those experiences. Their lives are for us, the current generation, a lesson on how to live in understanding. Workshop participants came from various countries, which included Germany, Poland, the Ukraine, Italy, Russia, Lithuania, Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. Joining us at the meeting was the Ukrainian opposition leader, and former Russian Gulag prisoner Prof. Myroslav Marynovych of the Greek Catholic University of Lviv. We listened to his story, which for many of us is known only from school textbooks.

Jorg Luer began the meeting, a staff member of Justitia et Pax in Germany and the chairman of the MKS. He stated that the aim of the Foundation is to work on understanding and reconciliation of the various viewpoints in Europe. It is a path, whose origins date back to the 1960s and the German-Polish reconciliation that was opened by Letter of Reconciliation of the Polish Bishops to the German Bishops. The Foundation has set itself the goal of preparing people to take responsibility for the reconciliation process in countries marked by violence and conflict, which took place already after the Second World War. There is a need to show, in places where we live, physical evidence that peaceful coexistence is possible.

Why did we decide to meet in Auschwitz, or better put, at “the threshold of Auschwitz”? This site is a symbol of the twentieth century and the horrifying consequences of contempt for human life. It is also a part of our mutual identity. There, at the threshold, we remember what happened during the Second World War and want to open ourselves to dialogue and living together in peace.



European workshops of Maximilian Kolbe Foundation

An important introduction to the workshops was the speech by the director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, who said, among other things, that there is no singular answer to the question of what role Auschwitz has. The more facts we learn, the more questions arise about Europe after Auschwitz. The experiences of Auschwitz forced the “re-invention” of Europe from scratch after the war. Auschwitz is the only concentration camp where the land, the site is most visible. At other Memorial Sites, the most visible things are monuments, but not the actual site. Here, the land still speaks about what had happened here, that is why there is a need to care for these traces of memory. Piotr Cywiński touched upon a very important aspect of securing that what is left, because of this, the site where humanity wants to come to terms with itself is

still standing. People are able to learn in other places. Here they come to be at the authentic site. They try to gain experience and come face to face with it. This is why it is now essential to secure this authentic site. He also highlighted three points in the educational process: remembrance, consciousness, and responsibility. This last element is the challenge for today, because from our involvement and actions the role of this place will be defined. In conclusion, the director said that out of the Museum, he would like to create a place that helps one exist. He also left us with an open and unanswered question: “At Auschwitz—within this authentic site of mass extermination—how can we bring forth, present the wider history”? This was also one of the challenges of our workshops—to reflect upon, when leaving Auschwitz, on a way to tell the truth about humankind and

free the constructive spirit that works toward building peace. There is a risk that the former concentration camp could become not a place of reflection, but a historical phenomenon.

We also had the opportunity to meet with former prisoners—Ignacy Krasucki, Wilhelm Brasse, as well as Kazimierz Smoleń. The latter had been a longtime director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, and we thank him, among others, for the character of the main exhibit at the Memorial Site, which has been present for fifty years, evidence of its universal dimension.

An important point within the program was looking at national perspectives. This year we had presentations from Poland, Russia, and Germany. The previous year, they included Polish, German, Ukrainian, and Bosnian. During the discussions, the question arose, whether we are able to avoid mistakes by looking to remembrance. How to deal with the scared memory of the past? This aspect was heavily emphasized by Father Tim from the Episcopal Conference of Ireland. He spoke about the, probably, longest religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. He brought attention to the subject that currently faith and religion are very strong symbols of identity; and that is why at the international level, such as, within the United Nations, a commission should be created that focuses religious leaders to consider a way to make it that religions do not divide, but instead are the source of building healthy identities. Archbishop Ludwig Schick, who was also a guest at the first workshop, presented ten points—rules for building



Participants of the European workshops

Photo: CDP





reconciliation in the world. He said, among other things, that we must learn the facts about and results of violence, eliminate violence through develop in ourselves a virtue of patience, penance, and mutual reconciliation. He added that the Church must take responsibility for the actions of its members and not wait until others do this for us—but, be the first to take a stand against injustice and on the road to reconciliation, to search for wisdom and the power of the Cross...

We also considered what meaning Saint Maximilian Kolbe has for us today, after listening to an introduction about the life of Father Kolbe, from various perspectives. We attempted to come to terms with his human life, whose meaning is one that not singular, but rather inter-

twined. Archbishop Ludvig Schick said that Christianity is much larger than the vision of one man who is always a child of his time. "His death summarized his life," the Archbishop stated. Our opinion is that in order to understand the significance of Father Kolbe, about what he did at Auschwitz, the accomplishments of his earlier life must also be seen. I believe that this aspect of his life is exceptionally important but not emphasized in his biography. Had there not been a heroic love for God, especially to the Blessed as well as the belief in that "only love can build," love would not have been victorious at Auschwitz. At the end, Archbishop Schick said that "there are times that faith has a high price, and it costs lives." Participants of this year's workshop walked together



Meeting with Kazimierz Smoleń—former Auschwitz prisoner

through the Way of the Cross, which in a different manner was able to bring forth awareness of the kind of hell that was Auschwitz-Birkenau. During the summary session, a part of the discussion focused on the fact that in order to construct a Catholic identity, members of other churches and faiths are nec-

essary, especially those most affected by Auschwitz as well as violence.

Another important aspect is not only to remain at the level where discussion takes place, but to begin building reconciliation and peace at other levels, such as the family, workplace, on your street, within your neighborhood—and this will give the

workshops a definite value. These few days, spent together in the various culture and language community, have shown us how much we need to listen, draw strength from our experiences and share hope. Right here at the threshold of Auschwitz. ■

Marta Titaniec

## COMMEMORATING THE 69TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF EDITH STEIN —SAINT TERESIA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS

August 9, is the day on which we remember Edith Stein—in the Catholic Church, known as Saint Teresia Benedicta of the Cross. This year is the sixty-ninth anniversary of her death.

Each year, the Center for Dialogue and Prayer works together with the Cracow Province of the Discalced Carmelites to commemorate the Saint, who in August of 1942 was deported to Auschwitz, together with her sister, and then murdered in the gas chambers at Birkenau along with other Catholics of Jewish origin. Anniversary ceremonies began at the Center for Dialogue and Prayer with the presentation of Psalm 22, jointly prepared by Fr. Professor Henryk Seweryniak and Sister Maria Lucyna of the Cross OCD. Father Seweryniak recalled the words spoken by St. Teresa Ben-

edicta of the Cross at the Westerbork Concentration Camp before her deportation to Auschwitz: "Only a great love will remain. How can it be any other way..." The second part of the commemoration began at the foot of the monument in the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau Concentration Camp with a prayer for those murdered and for world peace—Bishop Tadeusz Rakoczy led those gathered in this prayer. Among those attending the service were members of clergy, our guests—representatives from the Edith Stein Society of Lubliniec as well as Edith Stein House in Wrocław.

Psalm 22 was recited, as were the words said in this very location five years earlier by Pope Benedict XVI, and those attending were reminded of the prayer for the Jewish people said by the Blessed John Paul II. In silence, those taking part in the ceremony lit candles on the site of the Former Nazi German Concentration and Death Camp. The day ended with Holy Mass at the Carmelite Convent in Oświęcim. Bishop Tadeusz Rakoczy delivered the Homily. The Bishop highlighted the fact, that the valuable life of Edith Stein had within it the dramatic synthesis of the last century.



The anniversary celebrations at the former Auschwitz-Birkenau camp

"This synthesis of the history full of deep wounds, which to this day cause pain, was mixed with the full truth about mankind, about

the heart, which, for such a long time had not been fulfilled, until it finally found peace with God." ■

B.S.



Photo: CDP

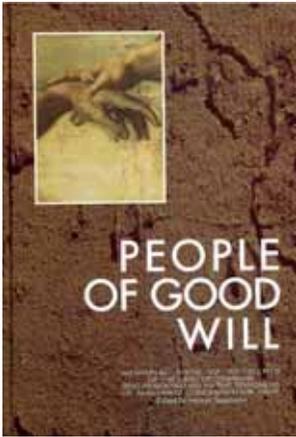
The anniversary celebrations at the former Auschwitz-Birkenau camp



Photo: CDP

The anniversary celebrations at the former Auschwitz-Birkenau camp





## PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL

TERESA LASOCKA  
(1904-1974; married name: Estreicher)

Born in Monasterzyska on February 22, 1904, the daughter of Józef and Maria née Ramaszkan. Her father was a professional officer in the Austrian Army, and later in the Polish Army, as a general, after the recovery of independence. She had three brothers—Stefan, Jan, and Kazimierz—and a sister, Ewa. She lived in Vienna during the First World War, and moved to Cracow with her family in 1918. She graduated from the Higher Commercial School there, and then from the Jagiellonian University in art history.

She was active in the resistance movement in Cracow during the German occupation. She did not belong to any party, but cooperated with the organizations making up Underground Poland, mostly the Peasant Party and the Polish Socialist Party. She maintained contacts with the Home Delegation of the Government of the Polish Republic. She noted down news from foreign radio stations, helped in the underground publishing movement, and

distributed the underground press. She helped smuggle people and informational material out of the country, and arranged counterfeit documents for resistance movement members and people being sought by the Gestapo. She played a large role in aiding the people being held in German prisons and concentration camps. In the latter field, she cooperated closely with the Prisoner Aid Section of the Polish Red Cross in Cracow. She was also active in the "Patronage" (the Department for the Protection of Prisoners and Their Families), which functioned as part of the Main Welfare Council, a charitable organization founded in Cracow in 1940 with the consent of the occupation authorities. Teresa Lasocka was in charge of the effort to aid the prisoners in Montelupich in Cracow, as well as the prisons in Tarnów, Rzeszów, Nowy Sącz, and Zakopane (the prison known as the "Palace") by supplying them with food, medicine, clothing, and disinfectant agents.

She played a special role in aiding the prisoners of Auschwitz, with whom she maintained covert contact beginning in the fall of 1941. She worked for the relief of the prisoners through two underground organizations. One of them was the so-called "Auschwitz Group" a sub-section of the "Patronage," and in

fact under her management. The second was the Committee to Aid Concentration Camp Prisoners (PWOK), set up in Cracow in mid-1943 at her initiative and in cooperation with her friends in the resistance movement, above all peasant and socialist activists. Their main focus was on Auschwitz, although the name suggests that their activities extended to many camps.

The aid to the Auschwitz prisoners was organized by her personally and, at her initiative, by the "Auschwitz Group" and the PWOK. It consisted of organizing funds and material resources, and sending them through clandestine channels to the underground entities that were active in the area around the camp and that maintained contacts with the prisoners—the Polish Socialist Party Brzeszcze Group and the local Peasant Battalions unit, as well as the scouts' "Auschwitz Operation" and the Silesian branch of the Government Delegation, which had a representative in Oświęcim. The contents of the shipments were varied: food, clothing, and an enormous amount of medicine, including extremely valuable anti-typhus vaccine obtained secretly from Professor Bujwid's laboratory in Cracow. In 1943-1944, this activity expanded to include organizing escapes from Auschwitz, pro-

tecting escapees, and preparing hiding places for them in Cracow and the vicinity. This was also the time when the focus shifted to documenting and revealing the crimes that the Nazis were committing in Auschwitz. The resistance movement inside the camp sent Teresa Lasocka and the PWOK information, reports, and documents on what the SS was doing. All of this evidence was then published in the underground press, for instance in the PWOK bulletin, and also passed on through couriers and clandestine radio transmitters to the Polish government in exile in London, and the Allies. The holdings of the Archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim include a great many secret messages from prisoners addressed to "Tell"—Lasocka's underground pseudonym. These messages include requests for medicine and thanks for medicine received, requests for food parcels, and descriptions of events in the camp, details of the extermination operation, reports on the way the SS was attempt-

ing to remove the evidence of its crimes, and warnings about plans to massacre the prisoners because they were witnesses.

Teresa Lasocka continued her underground work until the end of the occupation. She was fortunate to avoid arrest, but her brother Stefan and her sister Ewa were not so lucky. Stefan died in Stutthof Concentration Camp; Ewa was in Ravensbrück, but survived that camp.

After liberation, Teresa Lasocka helped the prisoners returning to Cracow from the German camps. In 1945-1946, she was in charge of a department for aid to former prisoners in the Cracow *Województwo* Bureau (the local government). In 1945, she married Karol Estreicher, a well-known scholar and a professor at the Jagiellonian University. She lived in Cracow until her death on January 16, 1974. She is buried in the Rakowicki Cemetery there. For her public and underground activity, she was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Poland Reborn. ■

Henryk Świebocki

## VESTIGES OF HISTORY FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE AUSCHWITZ MUSEUM

**A** dress, created from a piece of a blanket, was made in the Camp for an eight-year-old girl, named Maria Malikowska. Her mother, Marianna, had sewn this for her daughter, so that she would have the chance to survive the cold winter while imprisoned in the Concentration Camp.

Marianna Malikowska and her daughter Maria were deported to Auschwitz in the summer of 1944, just after the Warsaw Uprising. They arrived in the Camp during the summer, so they only possessed summer clothing. The prisoners tried to organize any sort of clothing for themselves and protect themselves from the cold as well as save their own lives.

The little girl was separated from her mother and housed in barrack number 16 at the Birkenau Camp. The block designated for housing children from Warsaw was one of the worse, in terms of its living conditions. On each "bed" where the children slept, there was only one blanket available. And because of the approaching winter, children often froze to death. Marianna Malikowska decided to sew her child some clothing, from whatever she was able to attain in the camp. According to Maria's post-War testimony, her mother used a camp blanket and hairpin to make her

the dress. The dress, made in secret, was lifesaving for the child. Towards the end of the war they were together as they awaited liberation in a camp near Berlin. Out of all the items that she saved from the camp, Marianna threw out almost everything. She only kept the dress, which she treated as if it was priceless treasure.

Several years after the death of her mother, Maria Malikowska donated her dress to the Auschwitz Museum. ■

Agnieszka Sieradzka  
Collections Department, A-BSM



Maria's dress

## FROM GANOBIS'S CABINET

**O**ften my friends ask me what the most important item in my collection is. I visually scan my museum collection, looking for that one item... and I cannot find it; because in reality all are of equal importance. Each has its own history as well as its own secrets, which I try to unravel.

I do not get too attached to individual items or histories; however, I do spend quite a bit of time investigating each

new piece. In many instances, this lasts several years. Often, I must solve several mysteries at the same time, which is a rather complex task.

Once a friend called me and said, "I have something interesting for you." He came to me with a plate with a single inscription "Oświęcim." I started my search, having absolutely no point of reference to go by.

Today, often there is absolutely no trace of the item's former owners, including their homes—except for what I hold in my hands. And that is what happened this time. I started to consider where in Oświęcim there might have

been a hotel or restaurant, because this could not have belonged to an individual. Who would have ordered a plate, specially made for themselves, with such a logo? The problem was even greater, given the fact that the plate's age could not be established, and, of course, at different times there were hotels and restaurants in different locations. Perhaps, I should have searched other institutions, such as the local factories? Unfortunately, sometimes I am unable to solve such a mystery, and this is most certainly one of those moments. ■

Miroslaw Ganobis



The plate with inscription "Oświęcim"

# PHOTO JOURNAL

Seventy years ago, in the cellar of Block 11, called by prisoners the “Death Block,” two events had their place. On August 14, 1941, Father Maximilian Kolbe was murdered in the starvation cell, furthermore, a few weeks later—at the beginning of September of 1941, the first tests in mass killing using Zyklon B were conducted, with prisoners as experimental subjects. Today, thousands of visitors walk through these underground corridors daily.



Photo: Pawel Sawicki



Photo: Pawel Sawicki



Photo: Pawel Sawicki



Photo: Pawel Sawicki



Photo: Pawel Sawicki



Photo: Pawel Sawicki



Photo: Pawel Sawicki

